

**THE PRACTICE OF GERIATRICS.** By John Agate, M.D., M.D.(Cantab.), F.R.C.P. (Pp. 490; plates 12. 50s.) London: William Heinemann, 1963.

THE purpose of geriatric medical care is to keep down the numbers of old people in the community reduced by illness to a state of helpless disability, and its practice calls for the attributes of the general physician, with one additional skill—a certain facility in assessing the likely response of an aged patient to treatment and attempts to restore activity. Success in this depends on knowledge of the variations in patterns of disease common to old age, and on recognition of the need to treat disability as something distinct from the disease causing it. Medical responsibility for old people seldom finishes with the diagnosis and “cure” of a specific illness. The volume of research publications, original papers and monographs on different aspects of geriatric medicine has grown enormously in the past fifteen years, but, with the exception of Exton-Smith’s treatise on the Medical Care of the Elderly, there has been no comprehensive account of the medicine of old age published in Great Britain as a guide to medical students or practising doctors. Dr. John Agate’s recent book, “The Practice of Geriatrics,” fills the gap.

Dr. Agate begins with a review of population trends, the physical, mental and biochemical changes of normal senescence, the infirmities inevitably arising from impairment of the special senses consequent upon physiological ageing, and the significance of social factors in relation to geriatric medicine. Having delineated this background, necessary to a proper understanding of the effects of illness in old age, and the importance of preventive medical care, the special factors that influence the course of illness and disability arising from it are considered. Successive chapters then deal with diseases affecting the different systems, in the orderly sequence of standard medical textbooks, but avoiding repetition of the details common to them in favour of emphasis on the “special hazards of being old and ill together,” and on the points in diagnosis and treatment of common disorders, and the combinations of circumstance, that have caused geriatrics to emerge as a discipline complementary to general medicine. Other special sections deal with the problems of surgery in old people, the approach to retirement and some of the administrative and logistic problems to be faced by hospital and domiciliary services.

This book is written by an author who combines wisdom, insight and a deep understanding of his subject with a wide experience and knowledge of general medicine. His views are expressed in elegant, lucid and most readable English. The print is clear, and the book is attractively bound and illustrated. Essentials are not skimmed, yet the size of the book has been kept to admirable proportions avoiding unnecessary or repetitive detail, and it has been produced at a cost that represents very good value for money. It would be wrong to suppose that this is a highly specialised monograph appealing only to the geriatric physician. It is a reference book of every aspect of geriatric medical care, presenting in clear and balanced style a subject which is usually passed over in the standard medical textbooks, although old people claim so much more medical attention at home and in hospital every year. This book can be confidently recommended to any doctor engaged in clinical practice, other than the pædiatrician and the obstetrician, and to every medical student.

I should like to hope that any book of mine would deal as well with its subject, and read as well, as this.

G. F. A.

**AIDS TO OSTEOLOGY.** By J. Joseph, M.D.(Glas.), D.Sc.(Lond.), M.R.C.O.G. Seventh Edition. (Pp. 203; figs. 51. 12s. 6d.) London: Baillière, Tindall & Cox, 1963.

SINCE the previous edition was largely rewritten changes in this edition are limited to sections dealing with the function of bones and their blood and nerve supply and a section on the teeth. With changing trends in the teaching of anatomy books on individual aspects of the subject may become less valuable, but students may find this useful for revision.